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OPENING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE OPENING OF THE THIRTY-FIRST UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

VOICE: THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES IN ITS HISTORY -- PARTICULARLY IN THE LAST YEAR OR TWO -- WHEN EVEN STRONG SUPPORTERS OF THE U.N. HAVE ENTERTAINED SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT ITS USEFULNESS. (OPT) RECENT SESSIONS WERE MARKED BY STRIDENT DEBATES, MEANINGLESS RESOLUTIONS AND AN ATMOSPHERE OF CONFRONTATION. (END OPT) THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, PROSPECTS APPEAR BRIGHTER. (OPT) AND ON THE OPENING DAY OF THE THIRTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY THERE WAS SPECULATION THAT THIS MIGHT BE ONE OF THE WORLD ORGANIZATION'S MORE CONCILIATORY AND PRODUCTIVE SESSIONS. (END OPT)

EVEN BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BEGAN, THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAD REFLECTED A SENSE OF REALISM WHEN IT POSTPONED ACTIOT ON THE VIETNAM ADMISSIOT QUESTION UNTIL LATER IN THE YEAR, AFTER THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THEN, AS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONVENED, IT WAS DECIDED TO FOREGO -- FOR THIS SESSION AT LEAST -- THE ANNUAL TIME-CONSUMING WRANGLE OVER KOREA. THE COUNTRIES WHICH HAD SUBMITTED A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR DISSOLUTION OF THE U.N. COMMAND AND FOR AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH KOREA ASKED THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO WITHDRAW IT FROM THE AGENDA. JAPAN, THE UNITED STATES AND NINETEEN CO-SPONSORS THEN DROPPED THEIR COUNTER-RESOLUTION. (OPT) NO SPECIFIC REASON WAS GIVEN FOR THIS RATHER SURPRISING MOVE BY THE SUPPORTERS OF NORTH KOREA -- BUT IT IS BEING RECALLED THAT AT THE RECENT NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE IN SRI LANKA THERE WAS A NOTICEABLE COOLNESS ABOUT RESOLUTIONS ON THE NORTH KOREAN ISSUE, AND

SPECULATION THAT PYONGYANG MAY BE LOSING SOME OF THE SUPPORT IT HAS ACQUIRED IN RECENT YEARS. (END OPT). ALSO, TWO POTENTIALLY TIME-WASTING RESOLUTIONS ADVOCATED BY CUBA -- ONE ON PUERTO RICO AND ONE ON PANAMA -- WERE NOT INCLUDED ON THE AGENDA.

THE MIDDLE EAST IS, OF COURSE, A PERENNIAL POSSIBILITY FOR TROUBLE AT ANY U.N. SESSION, AND THERE WILL UNQUESTIONABLY BE HEATED DEBATE AGAIN THIS YEAR ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. BUT THERE'S A FEELING THAT THESE DEBATES MAY BE SOMEWHAT CALMER THAN IN RECENT YEARS, PARTLY BECAUSE THE ARAB COUNTRIES; FOR THE TIME BEING, ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH INTERNAL REGIONAL MATTERS -- THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR IN PARTICULAR. CYPRUS, TOO, HAS BEEN A CRITICAL ITEM FOR PAST GENERAL ASSEMBLIES, AND COULD BE FOR THIS ONE; YET RECENT GREEK-TURKISH NEGOTIATIOTS UNDER U.N. AUSPICES HAVE PERSUADED SOME OBSERVERS THAT QUIET DIPLOMACY MAY YET ACHIEVE RESULTS.

THE BIGGEST ITEM ON THE AGENDA IS, OF COURSE, SOUTHERN AFRICA. A WHOLE SERIES OF RESOLUTIONS IS SCHEDULED TO COME BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY ON THIS ISSUE, AND THE SUBJECT IS POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE. YET EVEN HERE, THERE IS A FEELING THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER'S MISSION MAY PRODUCE THE KIND OF CONSTRUCTIVE RESULTS WHICH WILL LESSEN THE TENSIONS ON THIS ISSUE. (OPT) MR. KISSINGER IS DUE TO ADDRESS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON SEPTEMBER THIRTIETH, AND IT IS EXPECTED THAT HE WILL DEVOTE MUCH OF HIS SPEECH TO A REPORT ON HIS DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. (END OPT)

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, IN THE INTANGIBLE BUT VITAL AREA OF ATMOSPHERICS, THE THIRTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS SHOWING SOME MODEST SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT OVER RECENT YEARS. A SPIRIT OF REALISM -- PERHAPS EVEN RECONCILIATION -- WAS EVIDENT AS THE ASSEMBLY OPENED. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO

PREVAIL, FOR ANY ORGANIZATION WITH ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIVE MEMBERS AND ALMOST THAT MANY SENSITIVE ISSUES CAN ERUPT AT ANY MOMENT INTO A SERIES OF HEATED CONFRONTATIONS. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE THIRTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY MAY BE IN THE MOOD TO AVOID THE EXTREMES OF OTHER YEARS, AND TO HEED THE ADVICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL -- TO GUIDE "POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE FORCES OF CHANGE INTO CONSTRUCTIVE CHANNELS OF COOPERATION."

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